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reRead

Citation for published version:

Biggs, S, reRead, 2009, Artefact, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Germany (P0ES1S: Sprachspiele); Brown University, Providence, USA (Archive and Innovate conference and exhibition); Palazzo della Arti, Naples, Italy (First Electronic Language Conference and Exhibition) .

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Early version, also known as pre-print

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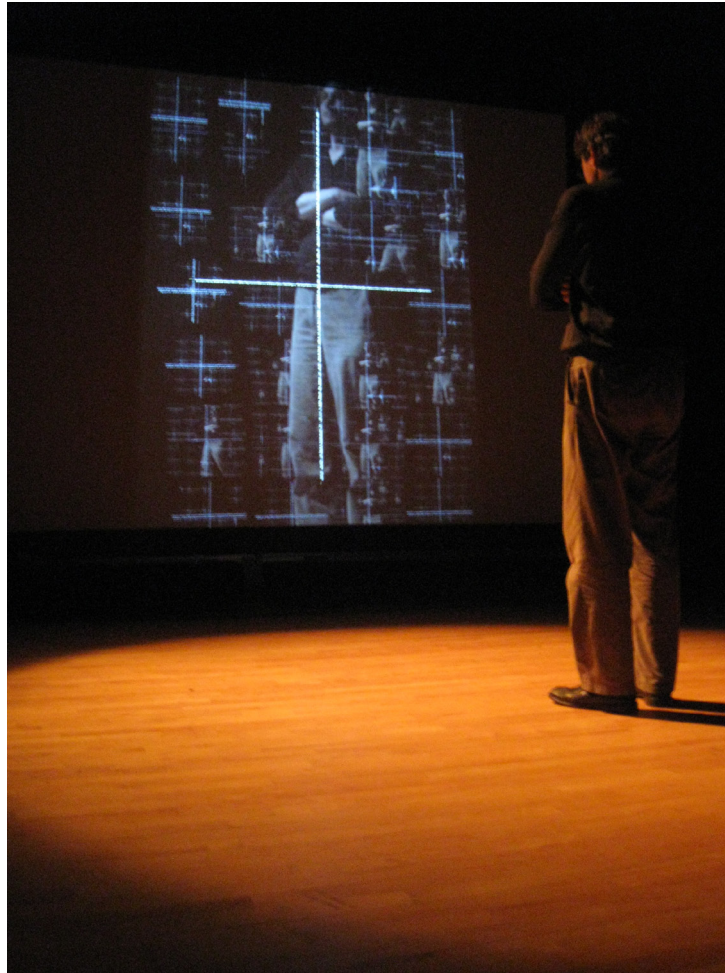
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reRead (2009) is an interactive installation that serves as a means of inquiry into the dynamics of writing that is written as a consequence of reading. The work employs closed-circuit-video, motion tracking, generative grammars, digital imaging and both conventional and electronic mirrors, each reflected in the other. The viewer is reflected, life-size, amongst orthogonally opposed and mirrored texts that are written in response to the viewer's movements.

reRead
output 2
Simon Biggs



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project introduction

reRead employs advanced algorithms that allow the detailed motion-tracking of interactors in the installation space. This functionality is complemented by a set of algorithms comprising a generative grammar engine which are able to write endless, and endlessly changing, grammatically correct texts.

The grammar engine operates at the individual word level, composed by the computer without apparent intent or contextual awareness. The full texts remain fully visible in the image. As they grow in length they shrink in size to fit the screen, eventually shrinking to a single illegible pixel in size before disappearing and then reappearing as new enlarged texts. The texts are reversed and are most easily read in a mirror that is mounted on the wall opposite the projection screen, requiring the viewer to turn their back on the projection and their own digital reflection.

Employing live video capture and recursive image processing, the projected image is composed of small versions of itself at different stages of its development; a mnemonic of reading and writing as palimpsest - both a remembering and a forgetting. The projection is sensitive to the viewer's movement, distorting as they move, creating an elastic reflective surface. The system writes and remembers only when the reader is present. When they depart, or stand to one side, the system enters stasis and begins to gradually forget, slowly erasing the image, sector by sector.

The motion tracking software employed in reRead was developed by the artist in collaboration with American software artist and engineer Josh Nimoy (now at Google's Mobility Labs) in C++. The control software for the installation was written by the artist in Lingo, as was the grammar engine. The grammar engine references Chomskian grammars but does not employ the structured grammar models associated with this approach, using a best-fit neighbor algorithm instead.

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project specification

1 high-specification Apple Macintosh computer with current version of operating system

1 low-light colour PAL (4:3) Firewire video camera

1 suitable video camera lens for exhibition space

10 metre Firewire cable

1 camera mount (tripod or similar for wall or ceiling mounting for sideways mounting - portrait format)

1 XGA 5000+ lumen video projector with ceiling mounting (mounted sideways - portrait format)

1 Projector lens appropriate for space to achieve desired projection size (see dimensions below)

1 front video projection screen, minimum 3 metres wide x 4 metres high

1 10 metre RGB 15 pin component video cable

2 dimmable and focusable Fresnel lights with barn doors, 1 profile lamp with dimmer

1 large portrait format mirror minimum 3 metres wide and 4 metres high

The installation space should have totally controllable lighting and complete blackout, with no ambient or natural light. All light will be provided by the projection and the lights. The floor area is 10 metres deep, 5 metres wide and ceiling height at least 5 metres.

<http://www.littlepig.org.uk/reRead/reread.htm>

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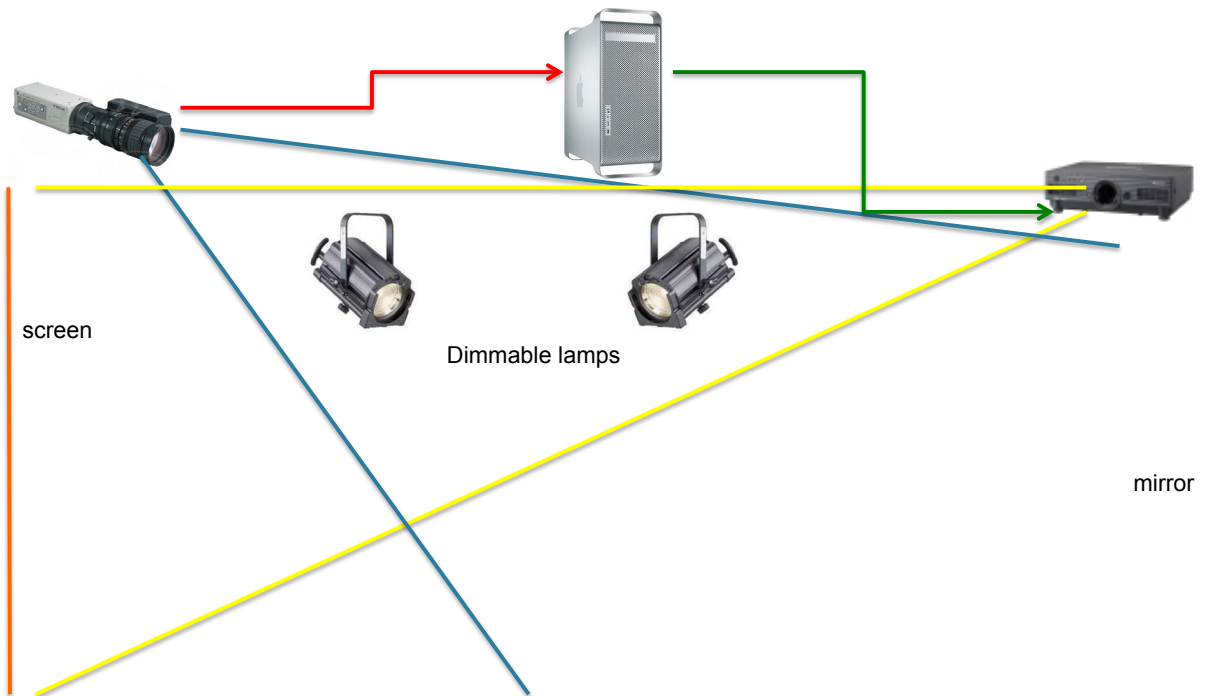


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reRead installation schematic

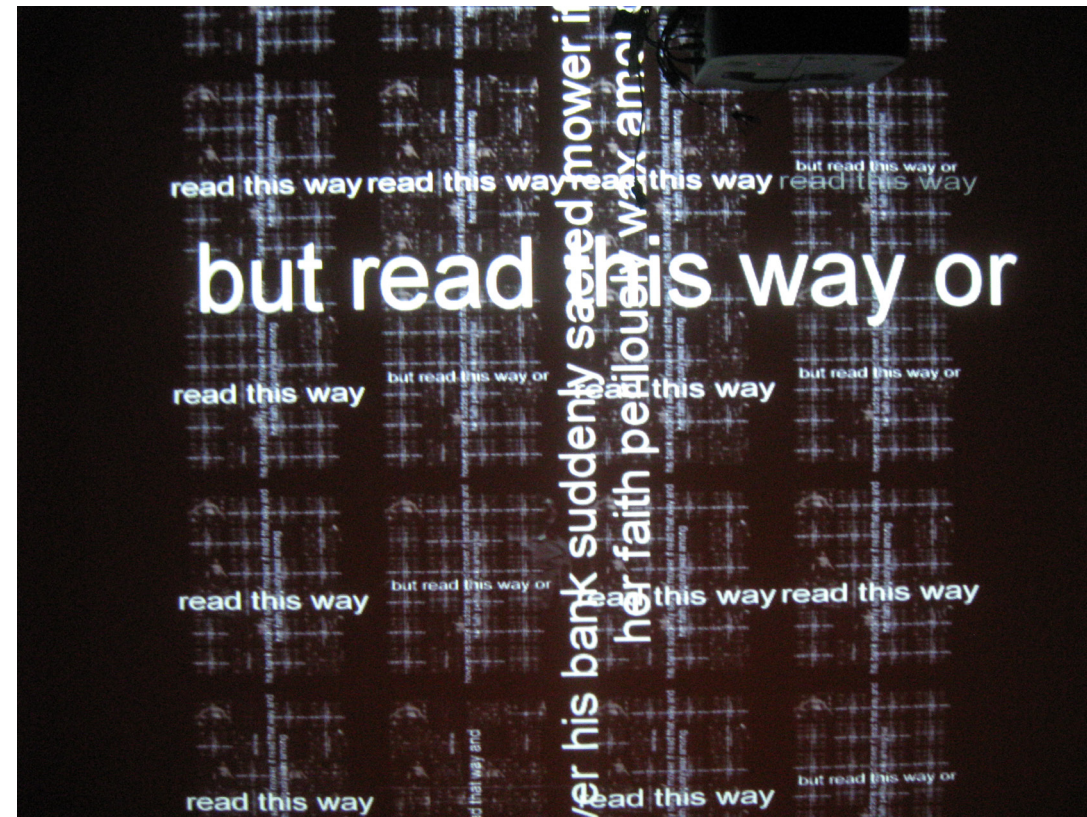
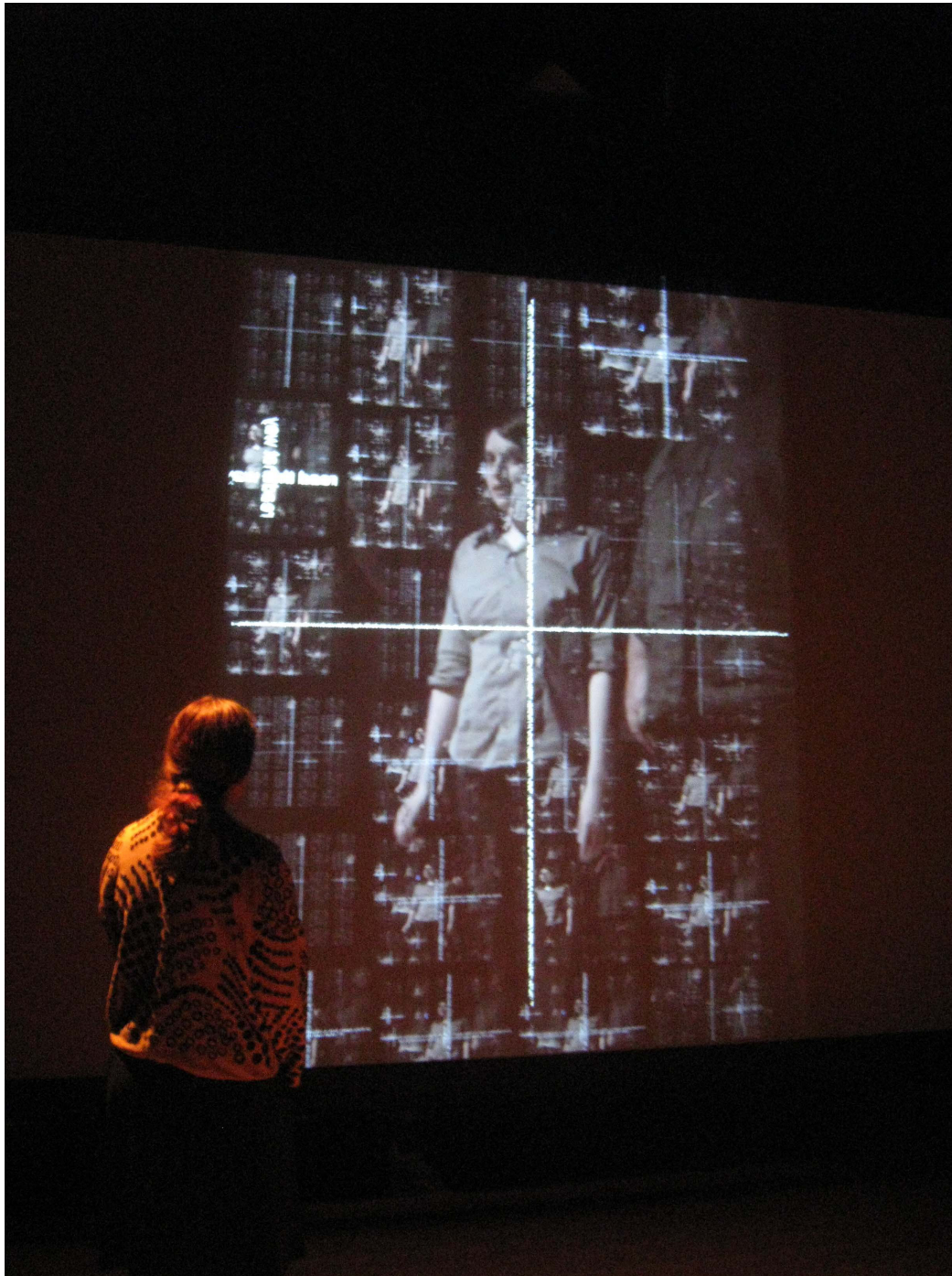


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project outcomes

reRead was originally commissioned by the Berlin Literaturwerkstatt (Berlin Literature Workshop) for their 2009 conference and exhibition Sprachspiele and has been exhibited at the following venues and events:

2009: P0ES1S: Sprachspiele (Language Games), Berlin Poetry Festival, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Germany. Curated by Friedrich Block of the Bruekner Kuehner Foundation, Kassel. Other artists included Johannes Auer, Rene Bauer, Florian Cramer, Eduardo Kac, Aya Karpinska, Yoko Ono, Joerg Piringer, Julius Popp, Beat Suter, Peter Vogel, Maja Ratkje and others. <http://www.literaturwerkstatt.org/index.php?id=690>

2010: Electronic Literature Organisation's Archive and Innovate conference and exhibition, McCormack Theatre, Brown University, Providence, USA, curated by John Cayley, Brown University. Other artists included Jim Andrews, Johannes Auer, Alan Bigelow, Serge Bouchardon, J.R. Carpenter, Robert Coover, Loss Pequeno Glazier, Fox Harrell, Judd Morrissey & Mark Jeffrey, Judy Malloy, Talan Memmott, Mez Breeze, Jason Nelson, Scott Rettberg, Bill Seaman, Christine Wilks and others. http://www.brown.edu/Conference/Electronic_Literature_Organization/

2011: Officina di Letteratura Elettronica, Palazzo della Arti, Naples, Italy, as part of the first Electronic Language conference and exhibition in Italy, curated by Giovanna di Rosario. Other artists included Philippe Bootz, Maria Mencia, Rui Torres, Pedro Barbosa, Patrick Burgaud, John Cayley, Derek de Kerkhove, Jerome Fletcher, Eduardo Kac, Jason Nelson, Scott Rettberg and others. <http://www.wikielettroart.net/wordpress/?p=153>

reRead has featured in the Cambridge Companion to Creative Writing (Cambridge University Press, eds. D. Morley, P. Neilsen, 2012), Beyond the Screen (Transcript, Bielefeld, eds. J. Schafer, P. Gendolla 2010) and the journal Texto, Vol. XVII, Nos 1/2, 2012, ISSN 1773-0120.

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